

David H. Groark

F-105 History

05-Nov-63

5227

At the 4520 CCTW at Nellis AFB NV, Class 64-E of F-105D Operational Training Course 111506E graduated 25 pilots. The course started on 6 September 1963 and was assigned to the 4526 CCTS commanded by Maj Warren Foss. The student pilots and their home stations were:

Lt Col William R. Peters - Itazuke	Capt Malcolm D. Winter - 388 TFW McConnell
Lt Col Louis R. Vogt - McConnell	Capt William J. Barthelmas, Jr. - 355 TFW George
Capt Dwight P. Bowles - Itazuke	1Lt David H. Groark - George
Capt Joseph Edward Bower - George	1Lt Murphy N. Jones - England
Capt Giles W. Gainer - Luke	Capt William M. Kurtz - George
Capt Teddy Gay - George	1Lt Cecil W. Powell - George
Capt Stephen G. Huisenfeldt - George	1Lt John W. Redmond - 8 TFW Itazuke
Capt Frank J. Kohler, Jr. - George	Capt Stanley S. Rynear - Itazuke
Capt Lothar A. Olman - Cannon	1Lt Larry G. Van Pelt - Itazuke
Capt Robert D. Pielin - Nellis	1Lt Victor Vizcarra - Homestead
Capt Robert D. Reichart - Cannon	Capt George M. Weeks III - George
Capt Robert P. Taylor - Myrtle Beach	1Lt Larry J. Wright - George
Capt Gordon M. Walcott - England	

Robert Taylor had entered the Air Force as an enlisted man. "In March '52 I entered Air Cadet training in Texas and earned my wings in March '53 when I graduated from T-33 training at Webb AFB, Big Springs, Texas. I went through F-84G upgrade training at Luke AFB, Arizona and was stationed in Maine with the then SAC Fighter Bomber Group. Went to northern Japan (Misawa AB) for Korean backup in the fall of '53. Our squadron upgraded to the F-84F swept wing planes in '54 and I went back to Officer's Electronic School at Keesler, AFB, Mississippi in mid '54. I pulled duty as Radar Maintenance and Communications Officer at Langley AFB, Virginia (TAC Headquarters), spent about a year at a remote radar station in Labrador, went to two years of electrical engineering school and got my BSEE from Oklahoma State University. I worked for a few years at Kirtland AFB, New Mexico on nuclear weapons drop systems and was manager of the electronic shop that did the installation of all the diagnostic equipment for the 1962 Christmas Island US nuclear drop testing. I then went back to full-time flying in F-100s and moved to the F-105s in the fall of 1963. I went to Itazuke AB in southern Japan for 6 months and then we moved the whole fighter wing to Yokota AB near Tokyo.

"... On my first flight at Nellis, I lost my ATM (Air Turbine Motor) and had to land without any AC power so used backup instruments only. This was somewhat sporty for the first time you ever flew in the machine."

Prior to his F-105 training, Lt Groark had flown F-104s with the 476 TFS at George AFB, CA. He went on TDY to Hahn AB, Germany, during the Berlin Wall crisis in August 1961 and in October 1962 was deployed to Boca Chica NAS, Key West, FL to fly missions around Cuba during the Cuban Missile crisis. (Dave Groark, e-mail 10 April 2010.) After his F-105 training he was assigned to the 80 TFS, Itazuke AB, Japan.

1Lt Vizcarra was an F-100 pilot from the 309 TFS at Homestead. His next assignment was to the 80 TFS, 8 TFW, Itazuke AB, Japan. ("Thud Pilot" unpublished memoirs)

SO AA-3 dated 6 Sep 63 in History of the 4520 CCTW, 1 Jul - 31 Dec 63, AFHRA Call # K285.5435, IRIS # 0488615 & Robert Taylor letter to Bauke Jan Douma, 2 Dec 1988.

17-Nov-64

29-Dec-64

1051

Pilots from the 80 TFS from Yokota AB, Japan, continued arriving at Korat RTAFB, Thailand, to

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replace the 35 TFS. This was the 80th's first combat deployment of the Vietnam war and they were the third F-105 squadron from Yokota to fly combat missions at Korat. Maj John P. Anderson commanded the 80th.

In addition to Maj Anderson, twenty pilots eventually deployed with the squadron:

Maj Phil Coll	Capt Robert D. Pielin
Capt Robert D. Reichardt	Capt David E. Weaver
Capt John Atkinson	"Pappy" Detwiler
Capt Giles W. Gainer	Capt Chan E. McInelly
Andy Olman	Capt Robert L. "Bob The Wedge" Keller
Capt Lawrence D. Wilson	Capt Wayne Ensminger
Capt Gary Banks	Capt Murphy Neal Jones
Maj Delbert F. Smith	Capt Chuck McClaren
Maj Arthur Mearns	Capt David H. Groark
Capt Victor Vizcarra	Capt Gordon M. Walcott

Capt Vizcarra described the primitive conditions he found at Korat. "The whole base with the exception of the flightline was on dirt, no concrete or asphalt roads or sidewalks. Sidewalks that did exist were wood planks like in the old west. Throughout the base, in the center of nowhere, there were pipes sticking out of the ground with funnels on top about waist high - urinals! There was no Officer's Club (O'club); enlisted and officers ate together in the mess hall. You either walked or rode bicycles to wherever you needed to go. The phones were connected with open wire lines that were strung out from beneath the hooches."

Victor Vizcarra, e-mail, 10 Sep 00 & "Thud Pilot", unpublished memoirs, Chap. 1, pp 2 - 3.

03-Aug-65

1055

A flight of four F-105Ds from the 80 TFS at Takhli RTAFB, Thailand, flew an armed reconnaissance mission over RP-1, North Vietnam. The flight consisted of Maj Arthur Mearns and Capt Victor Vizcarra as one and two, and Capt Dave Groark and Capt Cecil Powell as three and four. Each plane carried four 750-pound bombs and two pods of 2.75" rockets.

While looking for trucks on a road near the North Vietnamese and Laotian border, the pilots encountered flak from 37-mm AAA. They fired their rockets at the gun sites and headed out of the area without seeing results. Flying north toward Mu Gia Pass, they spotted a bridge over a deep culvert. Capt Vizcarra dropped his bombs on the bridge but his plane began rolling to the left as he pulled up from his attack. Initially, he thought he had been hit by flak since he saw three feet missing from the left wing's leading edge flap. Maj Mearns told him his left tank was also missing. Capt Vizcarra jettisoned his right tank to balance the plane and headed back to Takhli with Maj Mearns providing escort.

Weather over Takhli forced the two pilots to divert to Korat. After landing, they concluded that the damage to Capt Vizcarra's plane was not caused by flak but by a stuck pressure equalization valve in the left wing tank that caused the tank to rupture. Ground crews at Korat patched the plane with duct tape for a one-time flight back to Takhli where it was repaired.

Victor Vizcarra, "Thud Pilot", unpublished memoirs, chap. 5 pgs 3 - 6.

18-Apr-66

5176

The 6441 TFW selected the pilots for the squadron that became the 34 TFS to deploy to Korat. Most would come from the 36 TFS; consequently, the 36 TFS was slated to disband.

Bob Pielin from the 36 TFS, who had already flown 87 combat missions during temporary duty tours

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to Korat and Takhli, remembered how he helped select the pilots for the new squadron. "Fitz [Maj Richard P. Fitzgerald, the squadron's Operations Officer] and I initially made out a list of 25 pilots from the Wing resources to go as 34th members. The list was bounced back from HHQ as being too overloaded in pilots with over 50 missions. They recommended 6 guys in the 0 to 20 mission category, 6 in the 21 to 40, 6 in the 41 to 60, 6 in the 61 to 80, and anyone with over 80 to go TDY." This distribution was to spread out their eventual departures from Korat as each pilot completed his 100-mission tour. Capt Pielin and Maj Fitzgerald reworked the list "... with some pronounced disapproval from those that were removed from the [original]. ... A 1.5 aircrew/aircraft ratio was authorized for 27 pilots plus Commander and Operations Officer. ... Bob Jones [Capt Robert H. Jones] was removed from the first list since he had his papers in to be discharged. When he found out about the 34th going PCS to Korat, he volunteered to go with [them] and get 100 missions before he got out. Red Dog [Lt Col Howard F. 'Red Dog' Hendricks the squadron commander] worked a 'deal', and he went TDY." (Bob Pielin e-mails, 23 Sep 2006 and 7 April 2007.)

The following list contains the positions and names of the initial twenty-nine pilots assigned to the 34 TFS. This is the revised list after Capt Pielin and Maj Fitzgerald reworked their original to provide a broader base of experience. One of the pilots, Gordon Walcott, annotated his copy of the printed list, dated 18 April 1966, with this comment: "This was the original 34th TFS crew roster when formed as an all-volunteer squadron from the 35 TFS, 36 TFS, and 80 TFS (Yokota AB, Japan)"

Commander - Lt Col Howard F. "Red Dog" Hendricks who had been commander of the 36 TFS.
Operations Officer - Maj Richard P. Fitzgerald

India Flight

Flight Commander - Maj Wayne N. Whatley
Capt Robin K. Nierste
Capt James I. Miholick
Capt Douglas G. Lauck
Capt Robert H. Jones
Capt Robert R. Reed

Lima Flight

Flight Commander - Capt James E. Hayes
Capt Merrill R. Lewis, Jr.
Capt Gordon M. Walcott
Capt Stanley S. Gunnerson
1Lt John Bernard Sullivan III

Juliet Flight

Flight Commander - Maj Kenneth T. Blank
Capt Carl L. Hamby
Capt Thomas H. Curtis
Capt David H. Groark
1Lt Phillip J. Kelley

Metro Flight

Flight Commander - Capt Robert D. Pielin
Capt Alan K. Rutherford
Capt Ralph D. Watkins
Capt Wayne D. Hauth
Capt Rainford "Ray" McMaster Tiffin

Kilo Flight

Flight Commander - Maj Jack R. Stresing
Capt William O. Lessard
Capt John R. Layman
Capt Rex L. Dull
Capt Clarence E. Fox
1Lt Denis D. O'Donoghue

E-mail from Monty Pharmed, 22 Sep 2006 forwarding letter to him from Lt Col (Ret) Gordon Walcott dated, 29 Jul 1988, which included a roster of 36 TFS pilots, dated 18 April 1966.

02-Jun-66

5192

(Approximate date). Six F-105 pilots assigned to the 34 TFS at Yokota, flew in a C-130 to Takhli to partially satisfy a PACAF levy on 5th Air Force units to provide pilots on temporary duty to fill shortages in the F-105 squadrons in the 355 TFW at Takhli. The pilots were:

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Maj Kenneth T. Blank
Capt Carl L. Hamby
Capt Thomas H. Curtis
Capt David H. Groark
1Lt Phillip J. Kelley
Capt Douglas G. Lauck

In their time at Takhli, some of these pilots would fly combat missions with 355 TFW squadrons. While he was at Takhli, 1Lt Kelley flew his first (and only) combat mission with the 333 TFS. Unfortunately, he was shot down and rescued but resigned from the Air Force due to this experience.

Others on TDY at Takhli did not fly missions before they transferred to Korat. Doug Lauck recalled that he "... went through orientation there but did not fly any sorties." (Doug Lauck, e-mail 11 April 2007.)

The pilots stayed at Takhli until approximately 15 June 1966 when they rejoined the 34 TFS that finally arrived at Korat.

Over the next few days, other pilots assigned to the 34 TFS flew on C-130s from Yokota to Korat to join the four advance-party pilots who were already there. During this TDY, they flew combat missions with the 388 TFW's squadrons and airplanes until the 34th's F-105s could be delivered to Korat. For example, Capt Robert D. Pielin, one of the advance party pilots who arrived at Korat on 21 May 1966, flew two missions with the 421 TFS.

Capt Robert H. Jones was another 34 TFS pilot who deployed from Yokota to Korat.

Tom Curtis, e-mail 3 Apr 2007 and Bob Pielin, e-mail 1 Apr 2007.

18-Aug-66

461

For the second day in a row, the 388 TFW sent three F-105 strike flights, "Schlitz", "Outlaw", and "Manila", to again attack JCS target 51, the Nguyen Khe Petroleum Product Storage area at location 21-10-11N and 105-51-34E, just south of Phuc Yen Airfield and 8 nautical miles north of Hanoi. A fourth flight, "Honda", an Iron Hand flight consisting of one Wild Weasel F-105F from the 13 TFS and three F-105Ds from the 34 TFS, led the three strike flights to the target. Honda flight was to protect the strike force from SAMs. Its flight line up was:

"Honda 01" - Maj William Perry "Robbie" Robinson (WW #73) and EWO Maj Peter Tsouprake (WW #75).

"Honda 02" - Maj Kenneth T. Blank on his 51st combat mission over North Vietnam flying F-105D 62-4395.

"Honda 03" - Lt Col Howard F. "Red Dog" Hendricks, the commander of the 34 TFS.

"Honda 04" - Capt David M. Groark.

Honda 01 was armed with two radar-seeking Shrike missiles, two 2.75" rocket pods, and the 20-mm Vulcan gun. Honda 02 was carrying two 450-gallon external fuel tanks, two rocket pods, and also had the 20-mm gun.

The Wild Weasel crew, Majors Robinson and Tsouprake, had earned the Air Force Cross for a mission on 5 July 1966 when they had destroyed three SAM sites and heavily damaged a fourth. On today's mission they evaded three SAMs fired at their flight and were nearly shot down by one of two MiG-17s that attacked the flight immediately after the SAM threat. Their wingman, Maj Kenneth T. Blank, shot down one of the MiG-17s during its attack on the Wild Weasel flight lead.

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The Red Baron report described the flight to the target area. "The mission departed Korat, proceeded eastward, and rendezvoused with the airborne tankers at sea on a northerly course. The flight made landfall at approximately 19-22N and 105-56E at 4,500 feet, 520 knots CAS and turned westerly. The four F-105 flights were in trail at about five-minute intervals. As Honda flight approached the second checkpoint, in the vicinity of Kin Diem, a large thunderstorm blocked the desired course. After starting to circumnavigate the storm to the south, Honda 1 and Honda 2 became separated from Honda 3 and Honda 4 and the following flights caught up. The strike flights were no longer in five-minute trail but were within visual range of each other. The flights descended to the deck and proceeded northerly and passed directly over Phuc Yen. At Hoa Binh, the flight turned northeasterly to the target area, which was southeast of Thud Ridge and north of Hanoi. Honda 1 and Honda 2 climbed to about 6,000 feet maintaining 475-knots CAS as they approached the target area. There were scattered clouds with good visibility"

In an interview conducted on 14 March 1967 by the Red Baron team, Maj Robinson described his attack on a SAM site and his encounter with the MiGs. "The weather was about 7000-foot overcast ... so we couldn't get up very high. But we wanted to so that we could shoot a couple of AGM-45s into the site. As I pressed up to fire -- I fired 2 AGM-45s and told No. 2 to get ready to shoot his [rockets] -- ... this guy fired his missiles [SAMs]. The first missile was guided right toward my flight so we dodged it by diving down and pulling back up and letting him go under us. Then the other two missiles came off about 6 or 7 seconds after the first one, and they went up into the overcast. When I'd gotten rid of the first missile, I started back down. The second missile came over and went behind us. Then the flight off to my right ... called there were MiGs on my tail. I wondered what a MiG was doing in this SAM environment. We just dodged 2 missiles and why that MiG was closing in on me while I was dodging missiles, I never could figure out." The SAM site that had fired at Honda flight was VN-56 at 21-22-15N and 105-58-33E.

The Red Baron report described what happened next. The second missile "... detonated between Honda 1 and Honda 2. At this time Honda 2 was out in front of Honda 1 and a little to the right. The concussion from the blast blew out the afterburner in Honda 2. Another SAM passed over the flight and detonated. Two other SAMs were sighted but were no threat and disappeared in small clouds."

The lead in the following flight, Schlitz", called, "... 'Honda 2 you have a MiG on your tail.' Honda 2 turned hard left and saw the MiG was on Honda 1. Honda 1 was told to break left and did so as he jettisoned all remaining external ordnance and his center-line fuel tank. Honda 2 jettisoned his external fuel tanks and attempted to change his armament switches from air-to-ground mode to air-to-air mode. He did not obtain the use of his gunsight."

During his Red Baron interview on 4 January 1967, Maj Blank described the encounter with the MiG-17. "When I was still turning, he [Maj Robinson] started his turn, and he started yelling 'Get him off my ass'. ... I said, 'Break left'. He broke left and, as a result, he went underneath me ... and the MiG firing at him was so intense on shooting at him that he didn't see me."

"... Honda 2 broke hard left and maneuvered to a position behind the MiG at a range of 400 to 600 feet and fired his 20-mm gun. The MiG burst into flame and was observed to enter an inverted dive and impact with the ground. A second MiG passed through the flight in the opposite heading without engaging and departed the area. The encounter took place at 1528L in the vicinity of 21-20N and 105-50E."

The pilots in Schlitz flight saw the location of the SAM site that had fired at Honda flight and dropped their bombs on the site.

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"Honda 1 and Honda 2 departed the area and returned to Korat. Honda 1 had received light damage from the MiG." The damage consisted of one hit in the vertical stabilizer and a glancing hit in the left wing.

Honda 2 had fired 216 rounds of 20-mm ammunition. Due to the F-105's complex switchology, Maj Blank did not have a gun sight when he shot the MiG. "Pilot experience was a predominant factor in the successful destruction of the MiG."

Two F-105Ds in "Manila" flight, the last of the four flights following Honda flight, looked for 20 minutes for the POL installation then dropped their 750-pound bombs on a bridge. They were egressing the area when they encountered three more MiG-17s. Number 2 saw a silver MiG pass the flight about 1 1/2 miles to the left and climb up into a cloud layer at 4,000 to 5,000 feet. The pilot called the MiG to his flight lead. The flight "... had not received any MiG warnings but had overheard other flights engaging MiGs and had seen the airborne fireball ..." of Maj Blank's MiG kill.

A few seconds after the first MiG went into the clouds, it dove down about 1,000 feet from number 2 in a nose-low attitude. As happened to Maj Blank, the pilot did not have time to switch over to his air-to-air gun sight so he pulled up the nose of his F-105D, pointed the pitot tube at the MiG, and pulled the trigger firing 184 rounds. He failed to score.

The first MiG "... pulled up in a barrel roll ... and was maneuvering for position on the lead F-105D. At this time, number 2 saw two more MiG-17s just pulling in on lead's tail. Number 2 warned his lead and the flight jettisoned all stores, ignited afterburner, and headed down and toward Thud Ridge." The flight lead now had all three MiGs behind him and "... could see tracers going over his canopy." The two F-105Ds "... successfully outran the MiG flight, and recovered at home base with no further incident and no aircraft damage."

Aces & Aerial Victory, pp 31 - 32 & Red Baron source records in AFHRA folder K160.043-124 18 Aug 1966 - 4 Jan 1967 & Red Baron Events II-35 and II-37, pgs 129 - 135 and 139 - 141.

31-Aug-66

5150

Five pilots assigned to the 34 TFS at Korat, all of whom had flown missions during earlier TDYs, completed flying 100 missions during August 1966. They were:

Maj Richard P. Fitzgerald
Capt Wayne D. Hauth
Capt John R. Layman
Capt Robert H. Jones
Capt David H. Groark

On his 100th mission, Capt Groark remembered that, "I landed about 1030 and was on a flight to Bangkok and return to the States by 1200 that day." He was assigned to the Test Wing at Eglin AFB, Florida. "Arrived there and had orders to ARPS at Edwards. After graduation, I returned to the Eglin Test Wing. Left active duty on 1 April 1972 and flew F-100s with the Georgia Air Guard and then AC-130s at Duke Field Eglin. While at Eglin I was triple current in the F-100, F-105, and A-7. On my last day of active duty, I flew a mission in each airplane."

Capt Bob Jones "... resigned my regular commission, accepted a reserve commission, and separated from active duty on 3 September 1966. I was hired by American Airlines, and flew for the company until June 1998. During my airline career, I flew B-727, 707, 757, 767, BAC -111, L-188, DC-10 and MD-11 equipment. I joined the NJ ANG in late 1966, and flew F-105Bs with them until 1971. I transferred to the AF Reserve then and flew F-105D T-Stick II birds, F-4Es, and A-10s before retiring in 1992 as an O-7."

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34 TFS web site on 2 April 2007 at <http://s88204154.onlinehome.us.34tfs/scarf.htm> & Dave Groark, e-mail 10 Apr 2010 & Bob Jones, e-mail 24 Apr 10.

01-Dec-66

2360

The January 1967 issue of Republic's "Thunderchief Worldwide Report" included several recent awards and decorations for F-105 pilots.

Maj Kenneth T. Blank from the 34 TFS flew his 100th mission and reported to Nellis AFB.

Maj Wayne N. Whatley, also from the 34 TFS, earned an Air Force Cross for extraordinary heroism. "Whatley, now a test pilot for the San Antonio Air Materiel Area, won the medal for leading an F-105 flight against a fuel depot in North Vietnam."

"Eleven F-105 pilots, [actually 10 pilots and one EWO] aggregating more than 2,700 combat flying hours, joined in an impressive formation flyby recently marking the end of a significant tour of duty for each. The 11 flyers were returning from their 100th combat mission over North Vietnam. Ten of the group were assigned to the same tactical fighter squadron - making the occasion an unusual first for that unit [the 13 TFS]. The organization holds the day in special regard, since a dozen 'graduates' in a month's time is unusual, and that many in a single day is an extreme rarity. On their final mission, the group flew in three separate raids then, upon completion, they regrouped for a low-level flyby over their home base [Korat]. The 100-mission pilots [and one EWO] in the flyby were:"

13 TFS

Maj Frederic C. Hiebert
1Lt Roger J. Hagstrom
Capt George H. Vipond
Capt Roger L. Counts
1Lt Jerry L. Garner
1Lt Maxie A. Hatcher, Jr.
Capt Charles H. Haberstich
1Lt Russell M. Lanning
Maj Richard D. Westcott - Wild Weasel pilot (WW# 76)
Capt Herbert L. Friesen - Wild Weasel EWO (WW # 81)

34 TFS

Capt Duane H. Zieg

"Earlier that same day, four pilots assigned to another squadron [421 TFS] under the same tactical fighter wing [388 TFW] completed their 100 missions, making a total of 15 in a single day for the unit." The pilots were:

Maj William F. Loyd, Jr.
Maj Daniel G. McIntosh
1Lt Edwin L. Harvey
Capt Harry E. Mattoon

"Seventeen F-105 pilots, ... who completed 100 missions over North Vietnam, were presented with certificates at an informal session held in Florida this month. Making the presentation was Doug Meadowcroft, Republic program manager." The pilots and their SEA squadrons were:

Maj Hansel W. "Turk" Turley - 13 TFS
Capt Jimmy D. Ginger - 13 TFS

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Maj Douglas D. Brenner - 333 TFS
1Lt Thomas A. Gibbs - 469 TFS
Capt Robert W. Davis - 354 TFS
Capt Ralph A. Hanson - 354 TFS
Capt Cecil W. Powell - 354 TFS
Lt Col Ralph A. Ritteman - 333 TFS
Maj John J. "Jack" Gaudion - 469 TFS
Maj Frederick B. Green - 354 TFS
Lt Col Charles W. Barnett - 421 TFS
Lt Col Kenneth L. Skeen - 357 TFS

Five of the 17 pilots had flown their 100th mission while assigned to the 34 TFS:

Capt David H. Groark
Maj Jack R. Stresing
Capt James E. Hayes
Capt Allan K. Rutherford
Capt Robert R. Reed

Thunderchief Worldwide Report, Vol II No 5, Jan 67.